WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1. A method of recognizing handwriting, comprising:
- obtaining a sample of handwriting;
- 3 segmenting said sample into separate handwritten
- 4 words; and
- attempting to recognize a whole handwritten word
- 6 without attempting to recognize any individual letter of
- 7 the whole handwritten word.
- 1 2. A method as in claim 1, wherein said recognizing
- 2 comprises determining a silhouette of the word, and
- 3 matching said silhouette to one of a plurality of reference
- 4 silhouettes.
- 1 3. A method as in claim 2, been said recognizing
- 2 comprises determining features of the silhouette.
- 1 4. A method as in claim 3, wherein said features of
- 2 the silhouette includes high-profile features, and low
- 3 profile features, and locations of said high-profile
- 4 features and said low-profile features.

- 1 5. A method as in claim 3, wherein said determining
- 2 features comprises determining prime features.
- 1 6. A method as in claim 5, further comprising super
- 2 enclosing said prime features to form hybrid features.
- 7. A method as in claim 6, further comprising
- 2 sorting said features by first syllable blends.
- 8. A method as in claim 1, wherein said attempting
- 2 comprises categorizing said whole hidden handwritten word
- 3 according to its overall silhouette.
- 9. A method as in claim 8, wherein said categorizing
- 2 comprises categorizing positions of features in said
- 3 handwritten word, and categorizing first syllable blends of
- 4 said handwritten word.
- 1 10. A method as in claim 1, wherein said sample of
- 2 handwriting includes family names.
- 1 11. A method as in claim 10, further comprising
- 2 forming a list of a plurality of family names, and forming
- 3 silhouette information about said plurality of family

- 4 names, and comparing said separate handwritten words to
- 5 said plurality of family names.
- 1 12. A method as in claim 11, wherein said comparing
- 2 comprises forming silhouette information, and comparing
- 3 said silhouette information into said silhouette
- 4 information about said plurality of family names.
- 1 13. A method as in claim 12, wherein said silhouette
- 2 information includes information about the presence of high
- 3 and low parts in the written word and the position of those
- 4 high and low parts.
- 1 14. A method as in claim 12 wherein said silhouette
- 2 information includes first syllable blends in the word.
- 1 15. A method, comprising:
- 2 analyzing a sample of handwriting by analyzing a whole
- 3 word of said sample at any one time, said analyzing
- 4 comprising forming information indicative of a silhouette
- 5 of said whole word, and comparing said information with a
- 6 database of information about other silhouettes.

- 1 16. A method as in claim 15, wherein said database of
- 2 information comprises a database of information obtained
- 3 from a list of possible words.
- 1 17. A method as in claim 16 wherein said words are
- 2 family names, and said list of possible words is a
- 3 telephone book.
- 1 18. A method as in claim 15, wherein said silhouette
- 2 information includes information indicative of high parts
- 3 in the word and low parts in the word, and positions of
- 4 said high parts and low parts in the word.
- 1 19. A method as in claim 15, wherein said silhouette
- 2 information includes information about first syllable
- 3 blends in the word.
- 1 20. A method as in claim 18, wherein said silhouette
- 2 information also includes information about first syllable
- 3 blends in the word.
- 1 21. A method as in claim 15, wherein said silhouette
- 2 information includes prime profiles indicative of specified

- 3 features, and concatenated profiles indicative of
- 4 combinations at specified features.
- 1 22. A method as in claim 18, wherein each of a
- 2 plurality of silhouette information's is provided with a
- 3 number.
- 1 23. A method as in claim 18, wherein each feature is
- 2 assigned a number.